

## 'The Space Between' at SJICA

**T**he purpose of minimalism is to generate information. This does not simply mean, following Mies van der Rohe's famous dictum, that "Less is more," but that minimal art so often focuses upon a single concept or objective that it greedily invites explanation and discussion in order to fill an apparent void. "What is this about?" "There must be more." Once either one of these two queries is presented, information begins to flow, and documentation and substantiation take the lead, often not just supplementing and supporting the work but displacing and replacing it. This is neither good nor bad for the work, nor for art itself,

because of course this depends wholly on the nature and type of information generated. Certainly many "simple" found objects have been miraculously trans-

formed into cultural icons and artistic objects by deliberate displacement, from the ordinary and functional to museum objects, e.g. Duchamp's urinal. By deliberately calling our attention to the simple, the obvious, and the overt before our eyes, artists who work in this category, generally know exactly what they are doing, as much if not sometimes appear as if they are doing "nothing." It would be difficult to be an accidental minimalist even when the object transformed is involuntarily "found" because such transformation requires recognition and judgment before the transformative act.

The six artists—Brent Hallard, Gay Outlaw, Linn Meyers, Freddy Chandra, Mel Prest and Nancy White—in the exhibition *The Space Between* at the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art clearly know what they are doing and they are doing it very well. Outlaw's three masterful sculptures, *For Sale By Owner*, *Tier* and *Camo Cube with Plug*, are deceptively simple and straightforward objects and are in fact beautifully and meticulously executed. Using common materials—glass, cardboard, plastic and felt, as well as found objects like pencils and rubber hoses—Outlaw creates sculptures that rely upon perception,

repetition, penetration and the interplay of interior and exterior space. With her *Camo Cube* series, she pays homage to Sol LeWitt and his use of cubes to explore the way we perceive three dimensions. Both *For Sale By Owner* and the yellow *Camo Cube with Plug* are pierced completely through by parallel hollow tubes that penetrate the sculptures at an angle that makes the oval holes on the surfaces egg-shaped. This simple effect has the added intrigue of inviting the viewer to look up and down through the tubes to find their end, "see the light," and discover where the hollows lead. The *Camo Cube* has the kinetic effect of making the viewer want to fit the removed "plug" back into its mother cube.

Meyers created a beautiful optical site-specific ink wall drawing for this exhibit. On a corner of the gallery she drew two large "dumbbell" shaped figures whose circles touch where they meet in the corner intersection of the wall. By drawing repeated lines following the pattern of these mirror shapes, she creates the optical illusion that the wall is wrinkled and rippled. You have to look very close at the figure and its lines to confirm that in fact the wall is not covered with wrinkled paper. The actual drawing took more than sixty hours to complete, and a speeded-up video of her making the drawing adds to this impressive piece, showing the amount of work it took to complete the drawing and the number of times she had to climb up and down the ladder and stoop in the process.

Chandra also relies upon minimalist techniques and effects to create his pieces, which are often site-specific installations. *Fugitive Horizons (Endure)* is a disconcerting web and network of clear monofilament lines stretched out in a funneling pattern in one of the gallery rooms. As you walk into the room between the luminous lines of filament, you feel disoriented and unsure, as you must be careful not to walk into or across the lines. Once in the middle of the room, you are surrounded by the converging and diverging lines of the web and network, with light running along the lines, causing you to cautiously retrace your steps, following them back to the entryway, much like one might imagine a modern-day Theseus escaping a contemporary, "transparent" labyrinth. Chandra's two other works here, *Untitled I* and *Untitled II*, translucent wall pieces made of graphite, pigments, resin and cast acrylic with varnish, rely on similar subtle minimalist effects. Light seems to come from a source embedded within the acrylic and draws you to examine the surface striations and colors in search of this deeper source.

Prest also uses the technique of repetitive lines in her small-scale paintings to produce optical effects of vibration, movement and light curving around a cylindrical surface, as in *Transverse* and *The Thing Just Below*, a space formed of twenty-five small blue squares (five-by-

five) all painted with vertical lines in slightly varying patterns, again drawing the viewer closer in order to "generate more information." White creates visual paradoxes with small variations of painted triangles (#55) and constructed paper wall objects folded in different patterns and shapes, like *3DP #1.3/07*. Hallard uses very simple abstract geometrical shapes and drawings, like *Untitled Template* and *Key*, to convey his ideas of space, dimension, and the complexity of line and surface.

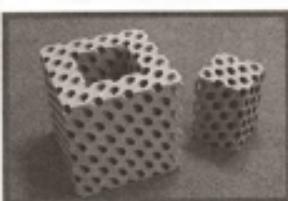
These talented and dedicated artists are devoted to their work and wholly committed to the concepts and principles guiding and driving them. The apparent simplicity and immediate accessibility of their created objects are inherently denied by the multiplicity of their effects and the richness of the information they generate.

—Frank Cebulski

*The Space Between* closed in April at the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art.

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Gay Outlaw, *Camo Cube with Plug*, 2006, Coroplast, paper, glue, 16" x 16" x 16", 12" x 8" x 8", at the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art.